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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 000750

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA COMPLETES PKF REINFORCEMENT, ABKHAZ CLAIM
TWO MORE GEORGIAN UAVS SHOT DOWN

REF: A. A. TBILISI 727

[1](#)B. B. TBILISI 687

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Russia completed its troop reinforcement of the (entirely Russian) CIS peacekeeping force over the weekend, bringing its total troop strength to somewhere between 2,500 and 3,000 soldiers, the upper limit allowed under the 1994 CIS decision governing the PKF. According to United Nations Observer Mission to Georgia (UNOMIG) observers, most of the reinforcements are concentrated in the Ochimchire district of Abkhazia, outside the security zone, and in the Gali district. The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on May 2 claiming that 700 additional Russian soldiers had been stationed in Gali and 500 more in Tkvarcheli, north of Ochimchire and outside UNOMIG's patrol zone. UNOMIG patrols observed the CIS PKF bringing in ten 122mm artillery pieces, and noted that some of the incoming peacekeepers had airborne emblems on their uniforms. On May 4, Abkhaz de-facto authorities claimed to have shot down an additional two Georgian unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The MFA rejected these claims and Georgian Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense officials told Embassy officials that Georgia has not flown UAVs over the conflict zone since the April 20 shootdown of a Georgian UAV over Ochimchire (reftel B). On May 5, Georgian media reported a clash between Russian peacekeepers stationed in Ochimchire and Chechen fighters. UNOMIG could not confirm the report, but told us that some shots had been randomly fired near the cease-fire line on May 3. No injuries were reported. End Summary.

Russia completes reinforcement of peacekeepers

[1](#)2. (C) Last week, Russia completed its troop reinforcement of the (entirely Russian) CIS peacekeeping force in Abkhazia. UNOMIG observers do not have an exact count, but estimate that Russia has moved in two battalions, which would give them about 3,000 troops, the upper limit under the 1994 CIS decision governing the PKF. UNOMIG also reports that the peacekeepers have brought in ten 122 mm artillery pieces (Note: The 1994 CIS decision does not explicitly limit the number or type of weapons used by the CIS PKF, though it is unusual for the CIS PKF to have large caliber artillery as part of their equipment. End note). UNOMIG observers also reported seeing peacekeepers with airborne emblems on their uniforms, which suggests that the new Russian peacekeepers may be from a more combat-capable force outside the typical pool of Russian peacekeepers. The Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement on May 2 claiming that 700 additional Russian soldiers had been stationed in Gali and 500 more in Tkvarcheli, north of Ochimchire, outside the zone of conflict and UNOMIG patrols. The statement went on to say that because of its military build-up in the region, Russia would bear the full responsibility for any military provocation.

Abkhaz shoot down two more Georgian UAVs?

13. (C) On May 4, Abkhaz de-facto authorities claimed to have shot down two more Georgian UAVs over Gali. The Abkhaz claimed to have shot one UAV down over the village of Dikhazurga, Gali district, at 16:06 local time and a second over the village of Bargebi, on the Abkhaz side of the administrative border at 16:51 local time. A UNOMIG patrol reported hearing an explosion and seeing two trails of smoke.

The patrol was directed to an impact site where 30 Abkhaz militia were already present, and shown debris of what the Abkhaz claimed to be a Georgian UAV. UNOMIG monitors were not allowed to photograph a large piece of the debris, but the Abkhaz allowed them to take several small pieces for analysis. Preliminary analysis has been inconclusive, but UNOMIG has told us that the pieces they were given do not look like they came from a UAV. The Georgian MFA denied the Abkhaz claim and officials from the Georgian Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense told Embassy officials that they have not flown UAVs over the zone of conflict since the April 20 shoot down of a Georgian UAV over Ochimchire. The Georgian MFA statement makes clear Georgia's right and intention to continue flying UAVs over sovereign Georgian airspace in Abkhazia in order to gather comprehensive information about the Russian Federation's military intervention.

UNOMIG cannot confirm reported Russian-Chechen clash

14. (C) Georgian media reported on May 5 a clash between Russian peacekeepers deployed in Ochimchire and Chechen fighters. According to the report, a shoot-out between the

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Russians and Chechens resulted in three wounded and the destruction of an ammunition warehouse. The Chechens reportedly took 30 Russian peacekeepers hostage. UNOMIG could not confirm the report, though one of their patrols passed near the village where the reported incident took place and reported that everything appeared normal. UNOMIG told us that the CIS PKF reported that some shots were fired on the evening of May 3 near the cease-fire line, but no one was injured.

TEFFT